

Meeting Minutes

Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board

December 14, 2005

6pm-8pm

Present: Vice, Amster-Burton, Healy, DeFrank, Koengeter, Fellows

Absent: Staeheli, McCarthy, Tachibana, Ketcherside

Public: Charles Smith (previous SPAB member), Andy Bethurum, Howard Wu, and Benjamin Smith (board candidates)

1. November minutes deferred until January meeting – Healy thought the meeting minutes did not require a vote. Hoyt to look into the matter. (Update – SPAB will vote on minutes)

2. Aurora Avenue North Improvements: Diana Holloway, SDOT.

Project aims to improve safety and mobility for all modes.

Background: Mobility plan was developed by SDOT, Metro, and WSDOT, covering Battery St. Tunnel to 145 St (Seattle city limits). SDOT's current work covers the North segment from 110th to 145th.

Budget and schedule:

\$11.5 million to construct a segment; money isn't there yet to build the whole project.

From this winter to next spring, defining alignment and doing ROW analysis.

Holloway described of old and new cross-sections (Graphic material)

The area is mostly C1-zoned. It's mostly outside urban village boundaries, but improvements are called for in various neighborhood plans.

Sidewalks and Landscaping:

Looking for 12' "pedestrian zone" wherever possible. This includes sidewalk and planting strip. WSDOT doesn't allow trees in the median, so there will be bushes or low-lying plants. There may also be bushes in the planting strips.

The Aurora businesses are working to keep the street auto-oriented; there are neighborhoods on both sides and lots of buses on Aurora, so there is conflict.

Landscaping can break up a dreary, monotonous environment. One way is to build an urban "gateway" at 145th.

Questions:

Vice: How many blocks can be constructed with the existing \$11.5 million?

Holloway: We have a consultant working with us to figure that out. As an estimate, 5-7 blocks. Alternatively, maybe we could just improve intersections, or improve drainage facilities.

Fellows: What's the estimate for the whole project?

Holloway: \$40 million.

Fellows: The current bus lane is poorly defined and has had a high accident rate. Is there going to be driveway consolidation?

Holloway: Yes, at least to some extent.

Vice: Will the city be purchasing the additional ROW?

Holloway: Yes.

Amster-Burton: Why should we be spending money on pedestrian improvements here when it's poorly used now and will likely be poorly used in the future?

Holloway: The mayor supports improving this corridor, and ped improvements have to be a part of that. There are also wheelchair users who are very poorly served now.

Fellows: Maybe the area should be analyzed functionally block-by-block.

Holloway: Keep in mind that we're not designing our improvements for today; we're designing them for the future, and we expect that density is going to grow here. Fellows, what improvements do you want for the BAT lane?

Fellows: Get rid of the two-way turn lane, because it's inconsistent with an express bus lane, and delineate the bus lane more clearly. Consolidate the driveways; make curb and gutter improvements; make it clear that when you pull out of a driveway, you're pulling into a travel lane.

Koenigter: Pedestrian improvements have to accompany the transit improvements.

Smith: Make excellent design a priority so that people will enjoy what you build, and have the design suggest the future of the corridor.

Fellows: What is the gateway concept?

Holloway: It's a gateway to the city, not to a particular urban village.

DeFrank: What if you concentrated on safety issues rather than aesthetics? Could you build more than seven blocks?

Holloway: Aesthetic uses and safety often coincide.

DeFrank: But building planters doesn't make people want to walk.

Holloway: We're looking at this as a 30-year project, and we expect higher pedestrian volumes in the future. There isn't a real pedestrian environment now.

Fellows: There are places that do have a good pedestrian environment on Aurora, and those are the places with businesses on the sidewalk and often with parallel parking. That's what we need to be looking ahead to if we're talking about transforming the north stretch.

Holloway: We can't put on-street parking on this stretch per our agreement with WSDOT.

Hoyt: What would be the most helpful feedback you could get from the board?

Holloway: What do you think about the gateways and the nodes? Where are sidewalks most needed?

Vice: If this is going to be BRT, that will be a pedestrian generator.

Holloway: I'm trying to gather data on what the numbers will be in about 2030. If you have any ideas, let me know. That type of data will help me justify the pedestrian improvements.

3. Round Robin

Tachibana (via email from Denmark): My priority projects to follow in 2006 are the Mercer Street revisions, which I think are coming to a decision point in January, and the Burke-Gilman trail extension from 8th NW in Ballard. I'm not if there are still decisions to make on the B-G extension but I'd like to make sure it gets done. (She will be back next month.)

Koengeter: I'm introducing Andy Bethurum, who has applied for the board. Today I attended a meeting about the I-90 2-way HOV project. Part one will involve screening of the shared pathway, because the vehicle traffic will be closer to the pathway. This meeting discussed three options for the type of screen; all of them could reduce the effective width of the path. The conclusion was that none of the options were adequate. There will be a meeting next month organized by Chuck Ayres of the Cascade Bicycle Club, and a SPAB member should go.

Healy: Two weeks ago I went to a presentation for blind and deaf people about overhanging trees on sidewalks. There were five presenters, including David Levinger. There was also a man from UW who talked about growth and rootspread patterns. It was a very interesting presentation. There were two people from SDOT. The audience consisted of people who had had a lot of problems with overhanging trees.

Today I tried to cross at Fremont and 46th. There was yellow tape blocking the intersection on the sidewalk. I had no idea where I was supposed to go to get around it, so I walked on 46th, but that is dangerous. How long are they going to be keeping that tape up?

Hoyt: Call 684-ROAD, or go to the SDOT home page and use the feedback link.

DeFrank: I used that website last week, and they got back to me within an hour.

The project I've been looking into is the waterfront. DPD has their concept plan on the web, and there's a newer version forthcoming. The plan is almost final and they expect it to be approved by Council in January. There will be a public meeting in February. Another project I'm interested in is Lower Woodland Park. They're putting in a skate park there, and it would be a good time to talk about the pedestrian issues at that difficult intersection where the Kidd Valley is, where 50th, Green Lake, and Stone Way come together.

Vice: DL sent me some pedestrian considerations that WSDOT put together, and I reviewed those and made comments. I received a call from Feet First and they want to do a monthly series on pedestrian issues, and they're looking for speakers. If you have recommendations, let me know.

As far as projects for next year, I'm tracking the SE Seattle Transportation Study. I'm interested in staying up to date on the sidewalk funding. In my neighborhood, we're trying to design the Beacon Hill Plaza near the new Sound Transit station.

Amster-Burton: My term expires in March, so I won't be tracking any projects next year.

I called the city about the problem I described last month about illegal parallel parking in the T-intersections on 15th, and I think I've finally convinced them that it's an illegal situation, but it remains to be seen how it will be resolved.

Hoyt: There will probably be a new council transportation chair, and they should be invited to the board. And we can't get the board's council vacancies filled until we get the new transportation chair.

The Pike-Pine crosswalk study will be presented next month, and we'll be looking for comments on what the city policy should be in similar situations. There are

repaving projects happening next year which could occasion road diets. The 20mph school zone sign policy may be changed.

Fellows: I want to start weighing in on the Ped Master Plan. I'm perpetually interested in opportunities for local option funding for sidewalks. There has to be a vehicle for sidewalk funding for more than seven or eight blocks.

Hoyt: The city is going to be hiring a person ASAP to manage the sidewalk building project.

Vice: We should monitor how that program goes and use specifics to lobby the council to make the project permanent.

4. Upcoming agenda items

Pike-Pine
ROWIM
Retreat (May)
Ped Master Plan scope

Hoyt: I went to a workshop on accessibility and different types of disabilities, and it could make a great retreat activity.

Healy: Maybe we could get those SDOT arborists in to talk about sidewalk trees. One was Liz Ellis.

5. Adjourn 7:47pm